



# ORIGIN

## BEAR WITNESS

### LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM ACTIVITIES

TAKE ACTION IN STATES WITH LESS-DEFINED POLICIES OR POLICIES THAT SUPPRESS VOICES.

## LONG TERM ACTIVITY:

# THEY NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU!

## Building Relationships with School Board Members

1. Identify your School Board Members
  - Look up the names and contact information of your local school board members through your school district’s website or local government resources.
  - A good way to find out your school district is to search online, “My address is [insert your full address], what is my assigned school district?” OR use a website such as [Great Schools](#) to input your address.
2. Request a meeting with your local school board representative.
  - Utilize the following email template:

### Email Subject: Meeting Request to Discuss Book Banning and Intellectual Freedom

Dear [School Board Member’s Name],

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to request a general meeting with you to discuss an important issue that currently affects our community – book banning and its impact on intellectual freedom.

I believe that a thoughtful conversation on this topic is crucial, and I value your input as a school board member. I would like to discuss the current book selection policies, the importance of intellectual freedom, and potential strategies to ensure that our students have access to a diverse range of literature.

Your insights and perspective on this matter are highly valuable, and I am flexible with scheduling the meeting to accommodate your availability. Please let me know your preferred date and time.

I look forward to the opportunity to meet and engage in a productive conversation.

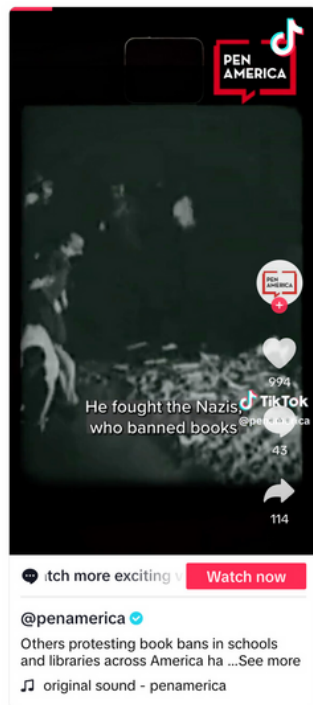
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Contact Information]



3. Connect with your school board member(s) regularly.
  - Maintain an ongoing dialogue to build a relationship and keep them informed about your stance on intellectual freedom. Follow-up through email updates.
4. Attend board meetings and community chats to stay informed with updates on policies.

## Video Resources



[Click to Watch](#)



[Click to Watch](#)



## Monitoring School Board Decisions and Actions

### STEP 1: Identify when your school board meets

- **Visit your school district's website:** look for a section dedicated to school board meetings or events. They are typically required by law to list meeting schedules, dates, times and agendas.
- **Sign up for notifications:** Many school districts offer email or text notifications about upcoming board meetings. Subscribe to stay informed about meeting dates and times.
- **Check with local schools:** Reach out to your local schools or district offices to obtain information on school board meeting schedules.

## STEP 2: Locate the school board agenda

- **Visit the school district's website:** Agendas for upcoming board meetings are often posted on the district's website a few days before the meeting.
- **Contact the school district:** If the agenda isn't readily available online, call the school district office and ask for a copy or details on how to access it.
- **Subscribe to agenda notifications:** Many districts provide an option to receive agenda notifications via email. Sign up to ensure you're always aware of the topics being discussed.

## STEP 3: Identify hot education issues in your community

- **Attend community meetings:** Join local PTA meetings, community forums or parent-teacher conferences to get a sense of the issues that concern your community.
- **Engage with social media:** Follow local education-related social media groups, pages or forums where parents and community members discuss current issues.
- **Network with educators and parents:** Talk to teachers, school staff and other parents to gain insights into pressing educational matters.

## STEP 4: Track how your school board votes on issues

- **Attend board meetings:** If possible, attend the meetings in person. Make notes of how each board member votes on important issues.
- **Watch live streams or recordings:** Some school districts live-stream board meetings or provide recordings. Review these to track voting outcomes.
- **Check meeting minutes:** Meeting minutes often detail how each board member voted on specific issues. These are typically posted on the district's website.

## **STEP 5:** Contact your school board member before/after the vote(s)

- **Establish a rapport:** Reach out to your school board member via email or phone to introduce yourself and express your interest in education matters.
- **Share your concerns:** Before a vote, communicate your stance on an issue, providing data or personal anecdotes to support your position.
- **Follow up:** After the vote, thank your board member for their decision or express your disappointment. Continue to engage them in a respectful and constructive manner.

## SHORT TERM ACTIVITIES:

# QUICK ADVOCACY

### OPTION A: CREATE A LETTER TEMPLATE

**Write letters to the school board and public library board:** Draft clear and concise letters expressing your support for intellectual freedom and your opposition to book banning. In your letters, consider addressing:

- The value of diverse perspectives in education
- The importance of allowing students to explore a wide range of ideas
- The potential harm of limiting access to certain books
- Encourage others to do the same: Share your letter template with friends, family and community members, urging them to send similar letters. Consider organizing letter-writing campaigns to maximize impact.

### OPTION B: EXPLORE THE HISTORY

Educate yourself and others about the history of book banning and censorship and the ways in which these practices have been used to suppress dissenting voices and limit intellectual freedom in the United States.

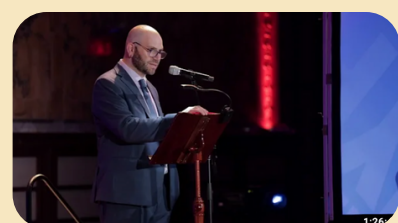
**Watch the following videos:**



**A History of Book Bans in the U.S.**



**Book bans in America are rising. Here's a look at what's lost.**



**Restricted Access: The American History of Book Banning (Flashpoints)**

## OPTION C: AMPLIFYING INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

**Support organizations that advocate for free speech and intellectual freedom:** Identify and support organizations that are actively working to protect and promote intellectual freedom. Some well-known organizations include the **American Library Association (ALA)**, the **National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC)** and **PEN America**.

**Share on social media and with your personal network:** Amplify the work of these organizations by sharing their initiatives, news and events on your social media platforms. They post a lot of content, so there is no reason not to support them!